

Sexting

In 2008, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy surveyed teens and young adults about sexting -- sending sexually charged material via cell phone text messages -- or posting such materials online. The results revealed that 39% of teens are sending or posting sexually suggestive messages, and 48% reported receiving such messages.

Top 5 Tips for Talking to Teens about Sexting, Courtesy of a Teen

- 1. Approach your child calmly, but firmly.**
It's important that your child knows that you care and that you're talking to him or her out of concern, not because you're trying to pry.
- 2. Stress the dangers of taking nude photos and sharing them -- especially through their cell phone or on the Internet.**
Ask your daughter or son if she or he wants to be humiliated because of one mistake with a camera phone. Ultimately, teens need to know that if they respect themselves by not trying to be amateur porn stars, everyone else will respect them, too.
- 3. Remind your teen that you pay the cell phone bills if your child gives you a hard time.**
Basically, our social lives and safety are in your hands.
- 4. Trust us and we'll trust you.**
We'd much rather deal with a lecture on responsibility than have you going through all our texts and e-mail messages to see for yourself if we're telling the truth. Just like we want you to respect our privacy, we'll respect your word.
- 5. Don't forget that you raised us pretty well.**
We know the difference between right and wrong. So, have a little faith in not just us, but in the values you taught us. Give yourselves a little credit; you deserve it.

Teens caught participating in this dangerous trend could face charges including possession of child pornography, possessing or exhibiting a photograph of a child in a sexual act, and distributing material of a child in a sexual act.

What Moms Can Do about Sexting

In many cases, parents have purchased their teen's cell phone and pay for the calling plan. Usage of the cell phone is a privilege for your teen. Rosalind Wiseman, author of "Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and

Other Realities of Adolescence," says parents should let their children know that they reserve the right to check their online profiles or cell phone at any given time.

Wiseman says, "You can say, 'Look, I have a life, and I don't want to be constantly reviewing what you do. But I do reserve the right to check this when I want,'" Wiseman advises. "A little bit of paranoia and fear in a kid is a good thing."

She says Monday is a good time to check the phone (right after the weekend), as well as any time "your mom gut is going off."

Some experts recommend confiscating your teen's cell phone if sexting messages are found. "Parents ought to handle this by keeping track of their kids or taking away their cell phones," one prosecutor, Craig Halls, says.

Another attorney we talked to encourages parents to consider whether their children should be allowed to have cell phones containing cameras -- or cell phones in general.

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Additional Resources for Sexting

- [The National Campaign to Prevent Teen & Unplanned Pregnancy](#)
- [American Association of School Administrators](#)
- [Sex, Etc. \(Sex Education by Teens for Teens\)](#)